



*South Middlesex*  
**Opportunity  
Council**

Organizing Resources for Social Change & Economic Independence



*South Middlesex Opportunity:*  
**SOUTH MIDDLESEX OPPORTUNITY:**  
*Annual Report, 2010*  
**ANNUAL REPORT, 2010**

## *President's & Executive Director's message*

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We believe that this report reflects the energy, passion and dedication to mission that is the South Middlesex Opportunity Council. Our mission has been, and continues to be, improving the quality of life for disadvantaged and disabled people.

That means all disadvantaged and disabled people including, and especially, those who present the most challenging needs in our communities. We thank the dedicated staff and volunteers who work day in and day out to meet the mission “to make it happen.”

Thank you.

Bruce Hulme, President

Jim Cuddy, Executive Director

## **Sage House**

a family residential substance abuse recovery program of the Behavioral Healthcare Division

## **Greater Worcester Housing Connection**

Ending Homelessness in Worcester

Victor is both a graduate of Sage House and a Housing Stabilization Case Manager with the Greater Worcester Housing Connection.

### **In Fy09:**

- **Approximately 3000 people were helped through SMOC Behavioral Healthcare programs**

### **Between 11/2/09 to 10/1/10**

- **231 people were assisted with housing from the Greater Worcester Housing Connection**

*Victor is an exceptionally dedicated employee who connects with his clients very well and quickly, and a person who always goes the extra mile for his clients, despite the stresses of managing family and recovery in his own life.*

Jayde Campbell  
Director of Housing Stabilization Program  
Greater Worcester Housing Connection

*Even when Victor was here and so ill, he still helped so many people – taking people to meetings and constantly being there for everyone else. In my mind, Sage House offers an individual a chance to re-gain their self dignity.*

Pam Chase Bernard  
Program Director of Sage House



Victor describes Sage House as the last and only option that he had other than jail or death. Victor had been in and out of jail and recovery when he realized that he was terrified. He was living with his girlfriend, Karen, and their two children and managing to hide their serious addiction – even from the Department of Children and Families who was monitoring the safety of their children. During one visit to their DCF worker, they made the courageous decision to ask for help. They took the risk and were being honest with their worker. She was able to get them into Sage House – together as a family with a four year old daughter and a 12 year old son. Sage House is a Massachusetts Department of Public Health sponsored family residential treatment program that works with single fathers and two-parent families and their children. Because of Sage House, Karen and Victor didn't have to decide between getting off of drugs and continuing to parent their children.

At Sage House, Victor got support for recovery, his family and got connected to employment and housing. "If I couldn't sleep, there was always someone to talk to." While in the program, Victor went back to school. He is now a licensed Certified Alcohol and Drug Addiction Counselor and is working towards his bachelor's degree by taking night classes at UMASS Boston. He works with newly-housed adults at the **Greater Worcester Housing Connection**, SMOC's Ending Homelessness Initiative in Worcester. In reflecting on his job, Victor said, "I was never expecting in a million years to be able to help people. I really didn't know what I really was expecting. You really don't know where people are going until you give them an opportunity. I think that what we do is special – we offer opportunities and open doors and then it's up to the people to soar in life or simply just try it again."

While Victor is helping people who are leaving homelessness, Karen is a shift supervisor at Starbucks. "We don't really have money in the bank but we have stable housing, food on the table, health insurance, two cars and our needs are met. We want to buy a home and be able to send our kids to college."

Prior to coming into Sage House, both Karen and Victor's mothers wanted the children to be taken away in order to stay safe. Their families had given up on them. Victor recalled a recent visit with his parents in Puerto Rico, where his father is battling cancer. "Now, I have a wonderful relationship with my mother, father, brothers and grandmother. It felt so good to go back home – just like when I was a kid. Now, I walk into a room and they have smiles on their faces. I look around and I cry."

Victor continues to struggle with significant medical issues and his children both struggle with their own needs and fears. But they are working together as a family to get the help that they need to address all that they have been through. "I couldn't have accomplished what I did without Sage House."

## Voices Against Violence

Mary Gianakis, the Director of the Voices Against Violence program reports that during the past year, Voices has seen an increase of 60% in the number of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault who are reaching out for services. “Each and every day we hear that the added stress of the current economic climate is exacerbating already abusive relationships. And, while we know that a poor economy does not cause violence, any additional stress tends to make things worse. We also know that unemployment is significant risk factor in domestic violence homicide.”

**In FY09:**  
*4000 people were helped through the Voices Against Violence Programs*

Survivors are also reporting that the reduction in other vital services make it that much harder for them to leave the abusive relationship. Because they are unsure that they will be able to put a roof over their heads or food in their children’s mouths, they may make desperate decisions about staying - even as the violence escalates. Services that address the safety and well-being of families do not operate in isolation, but rather work in concert to create a safety net of supports that enable them to become self-sufficient and live violence free. The net is only as strong as its weakest link.



## Workforce Development

Andrew works as a Crew Leader for **SMOC Energy Services (SES)**. SES provides weatherization and insulation services in the community, primarily to customers who receive fuel assistance through SMOC. When Andrew came to SMOC, he was homeless and was actively engaged in recovery from substance abuse. He was six months sober and staying in one of our emergency housing programs. Focused on his recovery, he was volunteering in local churches in the community to stay busy and stay out of trouble although he had ten years of experience as a painter.

**In FY09:**

- *approximately 300 individuals got a job with help from SMOC*
- *15 people received their GEDs*

He took his skills, experience and motivation and began working in a temporary position with **SMOC’s Ready, Willing and Able** program, 20 - 30 hours per week. Once he had income, he moved into **Service-Enriched Housing** where he lived with peers in similar circumstances. From this house, he moved into an apartment with his wife although after some time, it was clear that that relationship wasn’t right any longer. He moved back into SMOC housing so he could live in a sober environment with the common bond of living in recovery. He is proud to be able to sponsor someone else in the house through the recovery process.

Andrew was so successful in **RWA**, living in a supported environment, and maintaining his recovery, that in 2009, he was asked to supervise a crew in the Summer Youth Program, teaching young people how to paint.

In October, 2009, **SES** was launched and Andrew was recruited to be trained as a weatherization worker. He went through the training program and also became a licensed lead renovator. He was recently promoted to Crew Leader and has taken on administrative functions including scheduling of work crews. SMOC is also investing in Andrew to get his Contractor License.



Andrew shook his head in disbelief when he listed his simple accomplishments – stable housing, a driver’s license, a car – with the insurance paid, a bank account, phone, TV, cable and more. None of this compares to the tears that came to his eyes as he described his relationship with his 9-year old son who lives with Andrew’s mother. He had lost touch with both of them but now he drives to Connecticut every other weekend to visit. He has close, wonderful and trusting relationships with both of them. He is deeply proud that he could buy his son a Wii – with games – for Christmas.

In November, Andrew will reach two years of sobriety. When asked about his dreams, he says that he stays focused and keeps showing up and working hard. He is saving money and when the time is right, he hopes to buy a house and have his son come and live with him again. “I had no idea two years ago when I was in the shelter that I would be where I am today. There are limitless opportunities.”

## ***Supportive Housing Network***

Ralph is our longest-standing tenant. He has been living in one of our **Permanent Affordable Housing** units since June of 1987 – 23 years. He had been living with his parents and when it was time to move out, he needed something that was affordable. Ralph works at a local retail store in the community. Although he has seen a lot in all of these years, he also says that not much has changed. When he started, the rent was \$70 per week and has only gone up to \$90 per week so it's still very affordable and he has good neighbors. He has one of 14 rooms in the building and shares one of two kitchens and one of three bathrooms with others. Everyone is very independent. "I don't see staying there forever but it's very affordable and it works for me."

*I don't see staying there forever but it's very affordable and it works for me.*

Ralph



## ***Ending Homelessness***

Thirty-five years ago, a local paper referring to **Margaret Davitt** wrote, "When SMOC is hard pressed for an answer – she is the ultimate resource." Now, after 45 years with SMOC, Margaret continues to provide that foundation for the agency. Margaret was the Head Start Director for 25 years and has been working in the field of addiction and homelessness for the past 20 years.

The Head Start program was the first program of the agency and there were just six employees when she started. Soon, the agency expanded to include day care, employment programs, fuel assistance, elderly nutrition, a neighborhood youth program, detox, outpatient addiction services, welfare advocacy, **WIC** and more.

She describes the early years of the agency as going through a lot of turmoil and she laughed when she added that it never really quieted down. "It's been a real exciting place to work. There are so many opportunities to be creative – especially for young people."

Of everything that has been tried, the **Common Ground Resource Center** stands out as the most exciting to Margaret. The Common Ground is the hub of supported housing services for single adults in the MetroWest Region. "It's enabled us to put the whole team effort into something and it's so helpful to clients. We can hook them up to everything when they walk through the door." She went on to describe the coordination of housing, healthcare, employment and more.

When we first talked about Housing First, housing chronically homeless active substance users, Margaret worried a lot. "But it's turned out so differently. I'm really encouraged about people and their healthcare, especially. Several people are going back to school, many have gotten jobs and many have become sober."

*I just want to be able to continue to work – I've still got it!*

Margaret

Margaret reflected on the growth of the staff through this process. She marveled at the ability of some people, with very little formal education – but with big hearts and deep gratitude -- to make invaluable contributions to the lives of others. "The team really believes in what we do and are willing to take on challenges and risks. But, there is also a lot of sadness in this work and self-care and the team approach is helpful."

When I asked her about her vision for the future, Margaret responded "I would like to see an end to homelessness and I will continue to work towards that but new people are becoming homeless all the time. I just want to be able to continue to work – I've still got it!"



## ***Open Pantry Community Services***

Sandy Bell initiated local food drives in her neighborhood for the **OPCS Emergency Food Pantry**. Several years ago, on Halloween, she was handing out candy and decided to do “trick-or-treat” for the Open Pantry. Once the idea was approved, she made flyers and they started with 275 homes on 16 streets and then got a team together to get the food the day before Halloween. This year, they will reach 373 homes. Sandy marvels at how “one person could have just one idea and it could expand from there – reaching out and touching other people... it’s a gift that spreads.” She added that her goal is for other people to do this in their own neighborhoods and she deeply believes that one person can make a difference. Last year, the “trick or treat for Open Pantry” brought in 1260 pounds of food.

Through word of mouth and friends, people really came forward and began helping including her own grandchildren and other kids who are “runners” to pick up the food at the mailboxes. The kids also help stock and sort. The fun is enhanced because Sandy made sweatshirts and Volunteer badges, with the Open Pantry logo for the team to wear.



*I get so much reward for doing this.*  
Sandy

### ***In FY09:***

- *784 children obtained childcare*
- *581 children participated in pre-school activities to advance school readiness*
- *8169 households with young children improved health as a result of the WIC program*
- *The Emergency Food Pantry serves approximately 5000 households per year*

“I get so much reward for doing this. I think that this has a great impact on the kids. My granddaughter asked me if we were doing it again this year.”

In addition to the “trick or treat” event, last year, Sandy also organized the “Spring Fling” event through Cathedral High School which received food from 586 houses in Springfield.

This year, Sandy was in touch with a local parochial school – St Michaels Academy in Springfield and they are doing a food drive during the whole month of October. Sandy established a contest and will be donating a pizza party for the class that collects the most food.

## ***Head Start, a program of the Family and Nutrition Division***

Rob is the parent of a Headstart student. His four year old son is in his second year of the program. Rob understands that the program has given his son structure, interaction skills and is generally preparing him for kindergarten.

Rob began visiting the classroom to sing and play guitar for the children as a parent volunteer. He describes the experience as wonderful and very rewarding. He laughed when he told me that he is inspired to leave the computer business and explore ways that he can play music for pre-schoolers on a full-time basis. He sees how his ability to engage children can be transformative – “I see the kids interacting and participating – even those that were resistant.” Using his “enjoyable skills,” Rob is able to get everyone involved.

The engaging music time is more than just having fun. The teachers have asked Rob to come into the classroom just before “mat” time where some instruction occurs. They have found that the benefits from the music activity carry over into other parts of the day. The children are more focused and able to participate after spending time with Rob.

Rob’s son is very proud when dad comes and volunteers in his classroom and Rob finds the experience to be very rewarding.



*I see the kids interacting and participating...*  
Rob

## *Documenting History, Holly Hollerorth*

Holly is working on a history of SMOC and shared some of his learnings and insights. Holly came to SMOC as a representative of his church for a meeting to address concerns about the selling of the local community hospital. When he was here, he asked about what goes on at SMOC and responded, “I’ve never seen so many good things go on under one roof before.” Working on this history project confirmed this for him.

SMOC has done so many things over the years and people are often surprised to know that the agency has its roots in the Federal War on Poverty when Congress appropriated money to local communities to address poverty from the Office of Economic Opportunity.

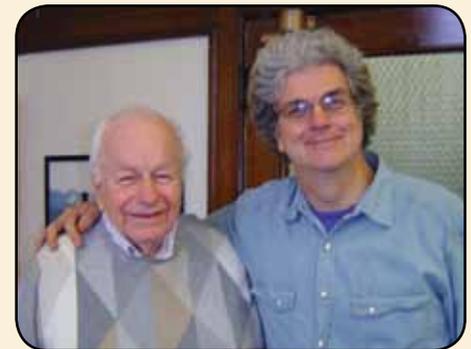
Of everything that SMOC does, Holly believes that the greatest achievement is the agency’s ability to put it all together – housing, mental health services, drug addiction treatment, alcoholism treatment, domestic violence services, educational opportunities, child care, nutrition services, physical health care, employment and skills training and placement, etc. and – all within a trinity of advocacy, and community development. “It’s really a remarkable holistic web that gathers up myriad human afflictions and ministers to them in a holistic way. It’s the only place like this that I know of.”

In addition to this approach to services, Holly asserts that SMOC has the most forward thinking, unafraid and audacious spirit and it has always taken on whatever challenges are necessary to meet a need. As far as he is aware, they have generally always worked – whether it was taking on a training program for inmates in the prisons, renovating dilapidated buildings, housing people who have long histories of homelessness and addiction, or taking on the banks so that they would cash benefit checks so poor people wouldn’t be gouged by “check cashing operations,” SMOC has demonstrated imagination and taken the initiative.

“SMOC is willing to take on the hard work of the world in order to save people’s lives”

*I’ve never seen so many good things go on under one roof before.*

Holly



*SMOC served approximately 37,000 people living in 25,000 households in nearly 100 communities throughout the Commonwealth*

# Awards

## Employees of the Year:

**ENY CAMARGO** Nutrition Assistant, WIC

Eny is deeply committed to the families that receive services from WIC and the mission and vision of both SMOC and WIC. She consistently goes above and beyond the scope of her job for the families she sees who are in great need, using her tri-lingual skills effectively. She takes it upon herself to help families in every possible way. When MA WIC Program staff came to us to discuss ways to increase our immunization rates, Eny embraced the opportunity to start some new strategies to increase our rates. She told staff, "We will reach 90 percent in the next year, I promise!" She remained positive and took a leadership role while ensuring it was a team effort. Her diligent work paid off as we increased our rates by almost 20% in one year.

Eny successfully completed additional training so that she can now serve not only low risk but also higher risk participants. She is a hard-working, dependable, passionate employee who is always willing to help others and does whatever it takes to ensure participants get served.

**KELLIE CALDWELL** Benefits Administrator, Human Resources

As the administrator of all our benefit plans, Kellie is a calm, soothing, voice of reason during an employee's most difficult times. She addresses every employee as if they are the only employee and goes above and beyond to seek out answers and assistance for even the most complicated issues. She is always mindful of the agency mission as she traverses the continual law changes, the employee's personal situation and agency policy in an effort to find the best solution for the employee.

As a team player, Kellie took over the responsibilities of managing leave of absences and worker's compensation, streamlining both in the process. She collaborates well with managers and others on the team to ensure we are being fair and consistent. Her ability to put an employee's mind at ease allows the employee to focus their attention on the important work we do here at SMOC. She epitomizes what a supportive human resources professional role should be.

**PEGGY GILLIS** Family Advocate, Head Start

Peggy has consistently demonstrated her dedication to her job, to the Head Start families we serve, and to the overall mission of SMOC. In her role as Family Advocate, parents respond to her genuine interest in their circumstance and efforts to support them. She has always been willing to assist with multiple projects within the program and has taken a lead role in working with parents of "Partnered" children (adding nearly 20 families to an existing caseload of 30!) and implementation of the Head Start Oral Health initiative (including co-facilitating two, 2-hour presentations for staff and the annual Parent Center Meeting).

Peggy is always willing to assist with multiple projects. She initiated a collaboration with the Danforth Museum and has taken a lead role in linking Head Start families to the NStar Reduction Program, as well as the NStar Arrearage Management Program which assists families challenge with paying their overdue utility bills. As a result more than 20 families were helped last year. She continues to exceed the requirements of her position, conducting herself with professionalism and serving as a strong representative in the community.

# Awards

## **Manager of the Year:**

**JAYDE CAMPBELL** *Director, Housing Stabilization, Greater Worcester Housing Connection*

Jayde Campbell assumed a critical leadership role in transitioning the People in Peril (PIP) program to the Greater Worcester Housing Connection. Jayde Campbell led by example while simultaneously training and guiding his staff. This new program is complex and required him to make numerous adjustments along the way. He took these challenges in stride and maintained a positive and upbeat attitude in presenting changes and adjustments to his staff. Jayde is a great example of “customer service” in action. He treats clients and staff with respect and does whatever is necessary to get the job done.

Jayde successfully implemented a new Rapid-Re-Housing program in the City of Worcester which has a more ambitious housing focus and goals than the previous “shelter” model. As a manager, Jayde has created an enthusiastic and energetic team that has successfully placed 230 homeless men and women from the PIP into housing during the last 11 months. He further encourages and supports his staff to pursue opportunities for growth and development. Jayde is extremely committed to the mission of SMOC and the Greater Worcester Housing Connection,

## **Volunteer of the Year Award:**

**JENNIFER BLAKE** *Serenity House*

Jennifer Blake is a long-time Hopkinton resident who has been an enthusiastic supporter of Serenity House. She is one of those people that you can call for anything at any time when the program needs something. She responds immediately, with a smile on her face and always asks “what else?” Jen always steps up to the plate with creative solutions to meet the current need – whatever it is -- from popsicle sticks for centerpieces to hanging pictures on our walls.

During the past year, Jen has: Organized volunteers and herself to paint each bedroom, hallways and common areas; facilitated a baby care group for residents with infants; brought holiday baskets with a variety of gifts for Valentines Day, Easter and Halloween; brought her daughter and some of her daughter’s friends to create blankets with all the residents; created art projects with the residents; and, actively participated in a very small fundraising committee which raised more than \$15k for the program

**RICHARD WINN** *Open Pantry Community Services – Loaves and Fishes Kitchen*

Dick has been a volunteer at Open Pantry’s kitchen for approximately 22 years. He helps us at the kitchen with lunches three days a week and his presence and assistance are greatly appreciated. He helps with food preparation, putting the food on plates and serving the guests.

Dick’s manner is friendly and calm even though it can be hectic in the kitchen. He has a great sense of humor and loves a little drama too. He is always welcoming to fellow volunteers at the kitchen. His greatest attributes are kindness and thoughtfulness with all the people that he comes in contact with at the kitchen.

## **The Frederick Rubin Board Member of the Year Award:**

**ROBERT CLARK**

This year, SMOC is proud to present the Frederick Rubin Award to Robert Clark, who served on the Board from 1996 until 2010. Robert, a former Stop & Shop executive and small business owner, has served as the town of Bellingham’s Public Representative to the Board. And while he has left the Board, the good news is that he has joined the agency in a Senior Management position. We thank Robert for his service and welcome him to the SMOC staff.

## *Margaret Davitt Spirit-of-SMOC Award:*

### GEORGE ORCUTT

George Orcutt has been a spirited, supportive and steadfast presence among people experiencing homelessness in Worcester. George has been an integral and consistent force as the program has transformed from the Public Inebriate Program, to the People in Peril Shelter, and now the Greater Worcester Housing Connection – always advocating for the needs of the people being served. Although the program and the name have evolved, the mission has always been to provide for safety and basic needs of the most deprived and disadvantaged people in the community. His employment began on June 26, 1988, but he already had a history at the shelter when he himself was homeless.

George will tell you that the shelter saved his life and, for the past 22 years, he has been giving back. His loyalty to the program – and its residents -- has manifested itself in a multitude ways over the years in both conventional and unconventional ways. Everything that George has done or continues to do, reflects his dedication to the success of the mission. He began working in the drop-in, evolved to the kitchen, to bookkeeper, to Chef, to Caterer, and so much more as he has managed various program and operational elements of the program.

Over the years, George has been the face of the PIP and the Housing Connection with a variety of vendors, police, funders, code enforcement, clients and, perhaps most importantly, staff. George leads a remarkably loyal staff. Many of the staff had connected with George when they were guests of the PIP. As they evolved through their own recovery journeys, they came to work for the man that gave them back their dignity. He knew the path – he had done it himself.

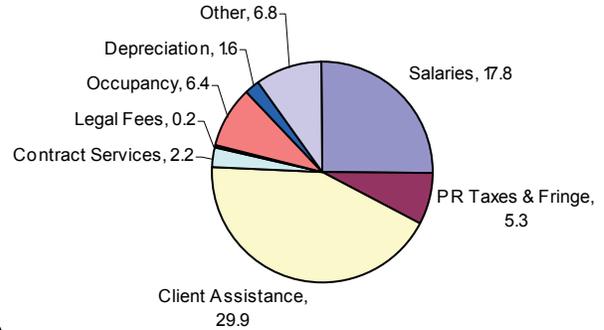
In his twenty-two years, George has returned the shelter’s gift many times over by leading countless adults on the path from homelessness to housing and self-sufficiency with dignity. George certainly embodies the “spirit of SMOC” and honors Margaret Davitt’s commitment to the agency, but more importantly, to the people whom SMOC serves.



## SMOC Consolidated Statement of Activities FY Ended June 30, 2010

	in millions
<b>Revenues:</b>	
Grants & Contracts	60.1
Third Party	2.7
Rental	4.7
Other	<u>4.1</u>
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>71.6</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Salaries	17.8
PR Taxes & Fringe	5.3
Client Assistance	29.9
Contract Services	2.2
Legal Fees	0.2
Occupancy	6.4
Depreciation	1.6
Other	<u>6.8</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>70.2</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b><u>1.4</u></b>

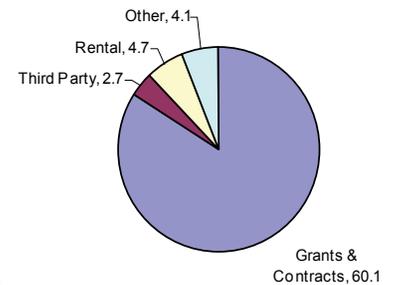
## SMOC FY10 Expenses in millions



## SMOC Consolidated Statement of Financial Position As of June 30, 2010

Assets		Liabilities and Net Assets	
	in millions		in millions
<b>Current Assets</b>		<b>Liabilities</b>	
Cash	4.7	Mortgage Notes Payable	39.6
Investments	0.9	Production Line of Credit	0.3
Accounts Receivable	3.8	Account Payable	2.0
Prepaid Expenses	<u>0.2</u>	Accrued Expenses	2.0
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>9.6</b>	Deferred Revenue	<u>3.8</u>
		<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>47.7</b>
<b>Non-current Assets</b>		<b>Net Assets</b>	
Property, Plant & Equipment	44.2	Unrestricted	11.0
Construction in Progress	3.4	Temporarily Restricted	<u>1.0</u>
Development	<u>2.5</u>	<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>12.0</b>
<b>Total Non-current Assets</b>	<b>50.1</b>		
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b><u>59.7</u></b>	<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b><u>59.7</u></b>

## SMOC FY10 Revenues



## SMOC Revenue (10 Years) in millions

